



Memorandum

June 8, 2005

TO: State Homeland Security Working Group
State and Local Officials
County Emergency Management Directors
Area Development District Executive Directors

FROM: Thomas H. Arnold
Director of Training Programs and
State National Incident Management System Compliance Officer

RE: NIMS AND THE HOSPITAL EMERGENCY INCIDENT COMMAND
SYSTEM

The NIMS Integration Center has received a number of questions recently concerning the relationship between the Hospital Emergency Incident Command System (HEICS) and the National Incident Management System (NIMS). HEICS is an ICS-based crisis management plan for hospitals to use to coordinate their own response to emergencies or disasters. NIMS establishes standard protocols and procedures for incident managers and responders to work together to prepare for and respond to incidents of all kinds, including natural disasters and acts of terrorism.

Contrary to rumors and recent reports:

Hospitals do not have to replace HEICS with NIMS. The new HEICS needs to be NIMS compliant, not replaced by it. We are working with California Emergency Medical System Authority to make sure HEICS IV is fully compatible. The current version of HEICS was issued before NIMS was released and there is no reason to stop using it now. Hopefully the revised HEICS will have what it takes to be NIMS compliant. Already it addresses the ICS component of NIMS.

The deadline for full compliance with NIMS is by the end of FY 2006. That means jurisdictions and emergency services organizations that receive federal preparedness funding have until Sept. 30, 2006, to achieve full compliance.

Everyone working in a hospital does not have to be NIMS trained. We recommend that only those directly involved in emergency response activities take the NIMS introductory course offered by FEMA's Emergency Management Institute (IS-700 NIMS, An Introduction). It is just that, a three-hour introductory course intended to familiarize persons in the emergency preparedness and response community with NIMS; much of the course focuses on the ICS component of the NIMS. It is up to the state or county to decide who must take it in order for the jurisdiction to be compliant with NIMS.

Hospitals are an important component of the emergency response/services community. They do not operate in isolation from other responders involved in a major event. We recognize that HEICS is part of a larger emergency management program and we support current efforts to make it NIMS compliant. There are other hospital emergency management programs and we expect to work with them also.

You may also visit FEMA's web site for ongoing information about NIMS at www.fema.gov/nims.

